

1 Introduction

Idea of Race ANTH 371/AFST 371/AMST 350

In 45 years of teaching about racism, I have found its story to be a powerfully enlightening narrative when the views of diverse scholars are presented in their own incisive language, each making his or her best effort to explain the problem in their times. The core of the book is based on a course which transformed over my years of teaching: Race, Biology and Society (University of Massachusetts-Amherst 1979–1980), Race and Gender, Racism and Sexism (with Johnnetta B. Cole, Alan Swedlund and Denise Miles, UMass 1981), Biology and Culture (Howard University 1982–2000; Spelman College 1989; Columbia University 1997), The Construction of White Supremacy (Institute for Policy Studies 1991), and Idea of Race (Brown University 1999; College of William & Mary 2001–present). It is cross-listed in its ultimate form for students of Anthropology, Africana Studies, and American Studies.

The focus of the course has always been three-fold: to understand White racism in America, to understand scientific racism as mutually influenced by science and society, and thereby to understand the intrinsic subjectivity of science as it repeats in elaborate fashion the false claims of its practitioners and their preferred White audience. I believe there is much beauty and utility in empirical science, or I would not continue to practice it. But a neutral way of knowing it is not. As the course tracks the history of the idea of race, it canvasses constructions of biology, anthropology, and historiography. These are as many guilds of memory, of story-telling and propagandizing, as they are technical fields. The biases become clear as evidence is laid out as props in a play, exhibits at museums, damned lies, and statistics. The story I tell is of science, not pseudoscience. As the late Stephen Jay Gould made abundantly clear in his work on the philosophy of science (1981), all of science is subjectively human. Frederick Douglass made the same observation more than a century earlier (1854). Following the course, this book affords a critical view of related things – race and racism in science and society.

I listened and responded to student comments and questions at these different times and places where I of course grew in my understanding of the problem. Black and White American schools, a woman's college, Ivies,

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private and state universities, usually in classrooms of 20-somethings and once (at IPS) of seasoned teachers. As a seminar course in classrooms typically of 12–15 students, I taught through our discussion of four-to-six articles or book chapters each week. We worked together to find answers and good questions in what for many proved to be a transformative experience. Our conversations were grounded in the substantial facts of what we read. I share those readings here through extensive quotations of those authors most useful and beautifully phrased truths.

Winnowing through articles over years of teaching, many old analyses remained on my syllabus as evidence of the unsurpassed thinking of those contemporaneous with the racial problems of their times. In every chapter of American history, knowledge was available to correct the problems associated with racism but was ignored. I object to the convenient trope among some historians and citizens that one is unfairly “presentist” for applying current standards of decency to the past. Particularly if one includes the African American voice, as though of other humans in our society, the presentist argument falls apart. Challenges to White immorality were always presented to them. They, in their racism and greed, usually *chose* to dismiss the moral rhetoric of their times. They chose to reconfigure a racist morality as a counter-argument to cover themselves instead.

My point is to help us understand today’s tangled racism, which lives in “fragility” and is expressed “with a smile,” a smile under which White people take cover from the acknowledgment of their racist discrimination and privilege, even to themselves. They perform it, still, cornered by the evidence. They continue to discriminate nonetheless to protect the wealth, security, and honor they continue to hoard unfairly at other’s even mortal expense. In other words, they now deny their racism in order to implement it and have apparently convinced each other they are innocently entitled to do so in peace. Might honest confrontation wake White people from their dream of exceptional merit in the 21st century, to find themselves citizens like any other? Or will they become defensive, compromising, evasive, or violent as they have been when cornered for past racial immorality, and circle wagons? This choice will be as much an experiment for readers as it had been for my students.

Classes were generally tasked to “question the unquestionable” in order to see what the ideology in which we were all immersed had hidden in plain view. These are Jefferson’s children, still learning to be racist from the convenient White narratives of gated communities, of consensual believers’ conversations, media and scholarship or they are pummeled by it. They are its material beneficiaries and moral victims. Yet, today most Americans display moral intentions of opposition to racism. The blinders a critical history of racism can partly remove, constrain what American students believe is possible. As these ideas, critical of racism, threaten old defenses of White privilege, they help educate young White people to share the world and to lose the privileges and dangerous liabilities of continuing to act in the spirit of

an American occupation rather than as equal citizens. Perhaps this is what today's hysterics surrounding "critical race theory" (of which this book may be a non-jurisprudential relative) are about, whether or not its fear mongers actually know what it is.

For many people of color, the contents of this book provide ammunition for their defense and evidence for the confirmation of their sanity. The dean of social history, W.E.B Du Bois, spoke of a problem in the first decade of the 20th century at a time when a 38-year-old Black person would usually have been born enslaved and still struggled to know his or her true self. The problem rested between the White man's thought to construct the conditions and ideology of White supremacy, and African American's thoughts devoted to their full humanity:

And last of all there trickles down that third and darker thought—the thought of the things themselves, the confused, half-conscious mutter of men who are Black and whitened, crying "Liberty, Freedom, Opportunity—vouchsafe to us, O boastful World, the chance of living men!" To be sure, behind the thought lurks the afterthought—suppose, after all, the World is right, and we are less than men? Suppose this mad impulse within is all wrong, some mock mirage from the untrue? So here we stand among thoughts of human unity, even though conquest and slavery; the inferiority of Black men, even if forced by fraud; a shriek in the night for the freedom of men who themselves are not yet sure of their right to demand it. This is the tangle of thought and afterthought wherein we are called to solve the problem of training men for life.

(Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903, "Of the Training of Black Men" pp. 1–2 of Chapter VI).

If there be any residuals of such thoughts, let this book demonstrate the "fraud."

This book might be used for a course on the historically formulated and reformulated ideas behind racist practice in America and the contradictory ideas that developed to debunk them along the way. It is also written for any individual to independently sit in on those discussions in the comfort of their home.

A note on tone. I tend to communicate contextually, which means I will give background to the story that directs you toward my conclusions. A Socratic seminar, which this is, is meant to stir one to think through the evidence yourself. I will also seek to be clear, if direct, about where this journey has taken me in the end. As a Morehouse student at Spelman College once surmised of my course, "So you are saying the truth is in the discussion."

Racism was invented in order to make White people feel comfortable despite their opportunistic abuses of other people's labor and rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It seems impossible to accurately

describe racism without also showing its fiendish ability to numb otherwise rational minds whose hands would brutalize fragile bodies that White people's eyes sought not to see, in other words, not without making them feel uncomfortable. I have always thought the historical distance from past events and the analysis of science as an institution went some way toward softening racism's emotional content. But White people's wrongs (for which one may reasonably feel guilt and shame) are always exposed, increasingly involving White students (or readers) themselves as the course slowly reaches the current era and its immoral implications for *us*. There is no way around periodic tension other than to capitulate to the purposes of racism itself (i.e., to make White people feel comfortable with wrongdoing) which defeats my purpose. What I say in class is that everyone is safe to express him- or herself and be heard while being fair to the evidence before us.

Some may meet that directness with the hackneyed reaction to my serious tone as "angry." While my respected mentor, Johnnetta B. Cole, liked to say: "Any Black man who ain't mad must be crazy," I am not angry in the emotionally handicapped way in which this accusation is usually meant. You have no reason to discredit my words unless you find false evidence. Nor am I entirely cold, inasmuch as my analysis is scholarly. I am dissatisfied (I do not always return a smile), with those White people who created a tangled, hateful mess of the opportunities of America and its science, rather than to have embarked on the other, fairer roads available, then to pretend they had, in fact, done so. The obvious question should not be why am I so angry. The question, White people, is why are you not? Their deafening affirmation of innocence for their wrongs bears out both White people's capacity for morality (they needed cover for their wrongs because they required moral behavior of themselves) and racism's fragility (its effectiveness as cover can be eroded because White supremacy is a lie). Thus, I am led to believe we are all capable of taking a turn on this road we have followed for a few hundred years, a blink of the eye in anthropological time. Nothing personal, but I will tell my carefully considered truth to my family and neighbors to the best of my ability, and hope it helps. The view in sight is promising, however, as the arch of the "moral universe," long and twisted, is shown to bend toward justice, just as Martin King said.

A Personal and Professional Perspective

Who am I? One persistent observation of the history to be described here is that knowledge is positioned and subjective to the observer's point of view even as a scientist. We will examine the creation and evolution of race from different angles by deliberately presenting how Black and White scholars among others have viewed these developments as they happened and with hindsight. I will also show how the subjective and convenient rationalizations of those in power have predictably overwhelmed evidence and reason until great societal and scientific contradictions occur. These contradictions

often require evidence and theories formerly ignored to be acknowledged and, if compromisingly, accepted. That is to say, the new “revolutionary idea” has long been present in the literature of those who understood their oppression but was ignored and dismissed by the oppressor’s scholars. This social-scientific processes observable among those working in the knowledge-producing institution of science is one window on how our understanding of race and racism has changed. So, for the purposes of transparency, I should give the background for my own point of view, my own process. I embed myself in the story I tell to reveal my vantage. Motivations may become obvious for how and why I became a specialist in the study of race and racism and a senior member of the faculties of leading U.S. universities, of late to claim Thomas Jefferson as “one of our students.”

I was present for Thurgood Marshall’s arguments at the Supreme Court deliberations on *Brown V. Board*. My hopeful mother came to court as the guest of a Justice’s chauffeur who lived in our building on Capitol Hill. I was her fetus then. I was born at Freedmen’s Hospital in Washington, DC. My father was a Virginia-born dentist, professor and scientist son of a physician and grandson of the enslaved, who ended his participation in the Great Migration on the freer, though still segregated, northern side of the Potomac. My artist mother also had a college degree (biology) and was born a Nanticoke or Moor in Delaware. These were African and European mixed native people who distanced themselves from slavery and complicated their relation to Jim Crow by adhering to their non-Black legal status (Blakey 1988). My mother’s participation in the rural-urban migration of her time was facilitated by a transformation to African American identity by some of her people, with access to Black colleges. They found themselves with a privileged status as low-pigmented people, like my father, in Washington’s highly developed African American society, historically contaminated by an internalization of White supremacy with which they struggled. But my parents were also political activists, whose house was busy with family, friends, and students across the color spectrum and among whom colorism found no comfortable quarter. Yet we remained critically aware that it had touched us. We were among the yellow people Leadbelly sang about in that “bourgeoisie town.” My family was among the many who pursued and honored their Africanity, nonetheless.

Racist insults were minimized in my Black Washington. Travel to my Virginia grandparents was different, however, as we (including brothers, Jeff and Kevin) could not stop to take a leak and did so as children in soda pop bottles in the car. Gas station toilets were either unavailable to us or our protective parents refused to use those with “colored” written on them. My dentist father, on the way to visit his physician father, stopped in wooded areas to explain he was going “to see a man about a horse.”

Restaurants were at least as restricted, excluding or requiring humiliation for their use. Only the few new chains, like Howard Johnson’s, on major highways began to open their doors. There were none between Washington

and Goochland in Central Virginia. Fried chicken traveled well, and grandma packed plenty of it for an uninterrupted three-hour return.

There was the day a White man, speeding through the end of Rock Creek Park in our corner of the world, yelled “nigger” at me from his fleeting car. And the day the KKK decided to march from Silver Spring, Maryland, down 16th street which ran through our fancy neighborhood, only to be stopped four blocks into town by a swarm of us Black neighborhood kids on bikes (apparently, the police decided they had gone far enough when one of us spat on a Klansman). They had been surprised by reality, not unlike the time they left announcements of a meeting on the doorsteps of our little Virginia beach community of Cappahosic, not knowing Blacks owned the nice houses, only to find a licensed turkey shoot in progress among Black men in the field where and when their advertised rally was held. At least that is the legend.

This was the interface of racism and African American success. A friend and I were recently talking about the brilliant musician, Miles Davis, son of a mid-Western dentist. Part of his life-long struggle seemed that White people had never seen a Black man like him before. And they did not like it. They could not stand us. But we children learned they would have to. Like the day in the mid-60s when my mother bought my first blue blazer downtown and the White clerk presumed to call her, “Thelma” as he read her check. “I don’t believe you know me that well,” she said. It was for me to understand and remember.

I was fully involved in the Black Consciousness movement in which we opposed racial marginalization (including the internalization of White supremacy by Blacks) and embraced our African heritage. We sought, and achieved for three years, African and African American Studies courses at Coolidge High School in DC where I headed the Black Student Union. We believed the absence of such history and culture deprived us of a full sense of our humanity, a historical humanity White people were spoon fed all day long. We high school students of the late 1960s also studied effects of racial and class oppression, essential knowledge, we thought, for surmounting that condition. I revisited this episode in a recent Washington Post op-ed (Blakey 2018). I was a member of cultural nationalist and Marxist organizations (including the Black Panther Party) where study groups emphasized the analyses of socialist leaders and African Diasporic scholars when I was 16–18 years old. I was also fully engaged in the anti-War movement and led a student march to the White House where I was beaten and arrested (the charges were later dropped). I was a guitar player who, well let’s say, left his parents’ sleeping bag in the mud at Woodstock.

During my three previous years of middle school, I was sometimes called “nature boy,” a geek whose yearly highlight was the Science Fair at what was essentially a magnet school. My elementary and middle school were nationally known as “the Amidon Plan,” DC’s initial experiment with racially integrated public education that, according to the great African American scholar activist W. Montague Cobb, would be stopped because “it worked too well.” I had long collected Indian artifacts under the tutelage of my collector great uncle, Kermit Mosley, in the soya bean and corn fields of Delaware. I regularly

collected and analyzed Miocene marine fossils with a friend and Science Fair competitor, Bob Sikora (whose White family once needed to disguise me as a “Puerto Rican” to convince the owner of fossil beds at Plum Point, MD, to allow my access). I had an eye-opening experience as the youngest and only Black member of the Archaeological Society of Maryland while sharing a 10'×10' square where I trained White South African and Rhodesian college girls in excavation techniques. Their parents were in the diplomatic corps. I recognized the fatuousness of their attempts to reconcile the anachronism of my presence with their belittling understanding of “our Blacks” in southern Africa whom they believed unready for democracy.

That year (1967), our family attended our annual musical concert at the Carter Baron Amphitheater just down 16th street in the wealthy Black neighborhood we called “The Gold Coast.” It always featured Harry Belafonte and Miriam Makeba who taught us about the inequities of colonialism, apartheid, and the Deep South with story and song. I looked upon the confused southern African college girls I instructed at age 14 with intellectual curiosity. I am sure the very fine White woman, Dorothy Martinek, who took me to all the Archaeological Society meetings and who took us to the site that day, knew what she was doing when she asked me if I “would mind.”

I conducted my first paleopathology study of 50 Suruque and Hawiku skulls in the collection of the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum in 1968, when I was 15 years old, under the tutelage of leading physical anthropologists (Donald Ortner, J. Lawrence Angel, and Lucile St. Hoyme who taught me the meaning of a standard deviation on their new, waist-high computer to whom I was close for the rest of their lives. My father, the Howard professor, had arranged this internship with Dr. Ortner at the Smithsonian after I had won the City Science Fair grand prize in earth sciences. Ortner was forever a kind and supportive friend, who had never met a Black person until adulthood but who had a great fondness for intelligence. Martin Luther King was murdered a couple of months before I started my summer’s work, and one could still smell the strong odor of the burned and moldy innards of downtown Washington as I came to work at the museum each day.

Just as I delved most deeply into scientific archaeology and experienced a larger environment that would transform and build upon my politics, I was also my artist mother’s son. Music was my medium, and over the next few years, I would shift focus to guitar – formal study and emulation of a rock (actually jazzrock) star lifestyle. This, of course, was partly driven by the fact that the “nerd” had discovered girls in a new way and bioarchaeology no longer served as an appropriate topic by which to introduce oneself. The money for my summer’s work at the Smithsonian (secretly provided by my father as though from a Howard “program”) allowed me to buy a guitar amplifier for that emerging identity. That summer also inspired my hiatus from archaeology. Nothing could have been more tedious than the array of dental and muscle attachment measurements I made, at least not for a 15-year-old kid.

Apart from regular camping trips throughout the United States (avoiding the South) and to Canada, and summers spent in the little Jim Crow African American beach community of Cappahosic, Virginia, where I now live permanently, these are among my vivid memories of childhood. In 1971 upon my high school graduation, my family chose to leave the United States and established expatriate roots in Port Antonio, Jamaica, seeking to be free of the constraints of a White supremacist society they had fought as civil rights activists. That is how we saw it. My father, Katus (named for his father's African roommate at Meharry), became Prime Minister Manley's Dental Officer and my mother worked in family planning. There is a clinic named for my father in St. Thomas Parish. There, through marriages, half my family became Chinese-Jamaican. Lest one misunderstand, I am, in a word, Black.

Science, politics, and art filled my life. I returned to the United States and spent three years as a musician poet, immersed in the culture of the streets I had not known growing up, broke but never poor. I became closer than ever to poor Black people and wealthy Whites. I was befriended by bright people chained to circumstances, it seemed, on both sides of Rock Creek Park, the traditional racial and class dividing line of the City. The neighborhood of Adams Morgan was largely Black, Latinx, and working-class with impoverished corners in the early 1970s. Despite my privilege, there and in the 14th street corridor where I also lived, I glimpsed the class struggles and racial segmentation of people I came to know as individual human beings.

Later, in graduate school, when I determined to conduct a study of race, class, and stress in a working-class London neighborhood, knowledge of good and bright people under the excessive challenges of their personal, familial, and social histories helped point me to social theories that recognize these challenges rather than the biological determinism in which much of human biology was awash. Inasmuch as the Black British were usually of Jamaican descent, our lives in the countryside of Portland aided identification of them and with them – and they with me. Yet, Blakeys had arrived in Jamaica to build a country manor house with Black Panther newspapers in tow. Our parents provided health care gladly in Michael Manley's socialist regime. We teenagers stayed close to Afro-Caribbean friends in secure working-class households, but we lived the contradictions of those now affiliated with "Jamaica Whites" of an indigenous plantation mulatto class, having come from a similar caste in the States undergoing an anti-colorism and caste transformation. And, as commonalities of class, anti-racist trajectories, and love would have it, we were close as well to the Chinese-Jamaican merchant class in town.

So, I should point to the many aspects of marginality that attend my life and vantage, accentuated by an adventurous and curious spirit that relished crossing lines. I know I would never become other than what I was and brought with me (broke but never poor); yet, my recognition of the identities across lines and empathy for their varied circumstances was enhanced.

Ultimately, I gave up on music and Howard music school by 1975, remembering another love by which I hoped to be not only more able than as a musician but a field which might do more good in the world, I naively thought. I returned to anthropology in which I majored at the leading African American research university, Howard, studying African, Maya, and prehistoric (Eastern Native American) archaeology. I studied under a recent student of Kent Flannery and Henry Wright (Laura Henley Dean), taken by "The New" scientific archaeology "fluorescing" (in the language of that movement) at the time.

At Howard, I was immersed in the history and culture of the African Diaspora and as a geology minor, was fascinated by the physical development of Earth. I was interested as well in the sociology of science; scientific racism engaged my desire to synthesize the things I had learned about the politics or subjectivities of knowledge. A devoted and politically active geology professor, David Schwartzman, taught us philosophy of science with Kuhn's (1970) *Scientific Revolutions* hot off the presses. The question of objectivity came to a head with me, however, when my self-directed archaeological study as a college junior in Belize in 1977 proved to me that Norman Hammond's sophisticated "plannar models" of Maya settlement could be interpreted so broadly as to make opposing conclusions equally valid. Then I decided that for graduate school I would continue to study epistemology (ways of knowing). I was taken by the work of Garland Allen, Stephen Jay Gould, and St. Clair Drake on the history of scientific racism in the United States. My naïve faith in objectivism continued, nonetheless. I had chosen to pursue biological anthropology in graduate school which, as natural science, seemed to have the greatest potential for finding objective or neutral truths about humankind. Rapidly, through the study of the history and philosophy of science, I proved myself wrong.

At the University of Massachusetts-Amherst (which recently awarded me the Graduate School's Centennial Medal marking mine as the exemplary work of its graduates in the Social and Behavioral Sciences), we all were encouraged to approach our work critically. As a teaching assistant in African American Studies (I would later receive an NSF Minority Graduate Student Fellowship as affirmative action to support my PhD work in anthropology), I prepared and taught a course entitled, "Race, Biology, and Society" modeled partly after one I took from the Oxford-educated anthropologist, Remi Ojikutu, at Howard.¹ I had decided to become an "expert on racism," when I left Howard, a field my White study-group associates in the philosophy graduate program at the University of Maryland thought absurd. "What would you do with that?" they scoffed. Still dismayed by those comments, I attended graduate school under the tutelage of Johnnetta B. Cole, a Black, feminist, Marxist student of racism (and of Melville Herskovits) and other anthropologists struggling to be anti-racist.

I studied paleopathology with George J. Armelagos, human adaptability with R. Brooke Thomas, demography and genetics with Alan Swedlund and

I studied neuroendocrinology at UMass (with George Wade) and Oxford (with Kimberly Summers). As a young professional, I became the last mentee in the life of the brilliant anatomist and activist scholar, W. Montague Cobb. I have been honored by these teachers, bright students, and illustrious, life-long colleagues (prominently including Lesley Rankin-Hill, with whom I frequently publish) whose many honest conversations are party to the way I think in this book.

Fortunately, I rarely shied away from pursuing what the old Amherst poet called “the path least travelled by.” I dance poorly and am worse at sport, though I play an icy game of chess in the real world, and I am an avid life-long sailor. Personally, I am heterosexual and agnostic (though perhaps a secular Christian reared by A.M.E. and Baptist families). I declared myself an atheist, leaving Sunday school at 10, and recanted as a more complete unbeliever, an agnostic, in adolescence. I consider most atheists whom I have met, like Richard Dawkins, to be alternative believers in nature. One should see in this book that my heresy is qualitatively greater than theirs. Yet, I have studied and treasure the important lessons and values of the world’s religions. I have been happily married, widowed, and divorced. I have an amazing son, named for the African who conquered the most developed part of Europe in 711.

Racism is a contributing factor in most of my studies, described in about 60 of my 90 publications. I mainly study American societies of the past 500 years when whiteness, as a social system and identity, often influences relationships between human biology and culture. These studies cover the health of free and freed Black children educed from skeletal remains in a 19th-century Philadelphia cemetery, the impact of choices of racial affiliation on the changing population structure of my mother’s people in 19th- and 20th-century Delaware, racism and stress among living Americans and the Black British in the last decades of the 20th century, the implicit racism of museum exhibitions that construct both human and national identities, the political history of racial anthropology and eugenics, and my best known project: New York’s 18th-century African Burial Ground in which African Americans protested to assure a dignified memorial (now a U.S. National Monument) and the most extensive bioarchaeological project yet completed. I recently began to use the circumstances surrounding that Project to exemplify the racism of my science and society (Blakey 2020b) and continue to dissect the problem of racism surrounding that Project near the end of Volume 3 this book. Perhaps because of the new ethics we brought to anthropology in New York, I was named the co-chair (with Deborah Thomas at UPenn) of The Commission for the Ethical Treatment of Human Remains of the American Anthropological Association in 2022.

There are other projects concerning the health of the children of earlier millennia in Illinois, the Sudan, and Italy. At La Sapienza, in Rome, I taught my innovated method for measuring the duration of pathological stresses in childhood and fetal life using skeletal remains (Blakey 1981; Blakey and Armelagos 1985). Anthropology, the study of humankind, is an amazing arena for

exploring all the uncertainties one has about what it means to be human. In the past 300 years, race has figured greatly in what that means, whether one has benefitted from the idea of White supremacy or been trampled by it.

Let this stand for now as my explication of where in the social, political, and academic neighborhood my window on race is positioned. As my leading archaeology professor, H. Martin Wobst, liked to say, "You can't jump your own shadow." Others may reasonably assess my vantage in some ways more critically than can I. And it is important for any reader to be aware that authors more reliably tell you what they believe you should know, than what they actually think. I will do my best to tell the truth.

Clearly, my family dug its way out of the worst material inequities of racism from the moment my slavery-born great-grandparents purchased their own land and one of their sons finished Meharry Medical School. Smart and industrious (like many) and luckier than most, the rest of my family's struggle for security became a matter of management, never again the lifting of a mountain. Jim Crow provided a pathway for a limited number of Blacks to climb to positions, like the doctors, dentists, teachers, preachers, morticians, electricians, beauticians and carpenters a bifurcated society had to have. But not so many. Massive unmerited poverty and the powerlessness of a denigrated identity are the great ugliness of racism. No telling what we could have become without racism, surely to have more were we to have been privileged as White people. But my family like many I know navigated its waters with greater success than most. Racism continues to threaten my security and achievement every day in this White supremacist society. Positioned to study and report on it, I do so as anthropologist Faye Harrison says makes a critical difference, because my vantage is as one who, due to commonalities of interest and experience, loves Black people (Harrison 2008).

I do understand a denigrated identity, however, and with the particular awareness that springs from the absolute life-long knowledge that White people are not superior to me. They are rarely third-generation doctorates. Growing up in a slowly desegregating Washington, DC, with a 70% Black citizenry, it made little sense that White people should be the problem I sometimes overheard: how many of them are there anyway? I thought as a child. The community largely of professionals and federal workers, with stable families, and substantial resources in which I grew up in no way lacked the intelligence and industry sometimes seen in White people. I could say the same of less economically secure working-class people in the United States, Britain, and the Caribbean whom I knew well. So, the presumptions of superiority so frequently expressed are a kind of obvious idiocy were it not for the fact that in their White world, that I partly share, one hears racist assumptions ring with a mutually consensual factuality among them. And this applies as much to the attitudes and story-making of White scientists as to their cousins and neighbors who are lay citizens. We will see the continuation of corrupting influences of consensually false, racist assumptions of hermetic and homogeneous White society upon science and history.

Toward the end of this book, I will use my experiences and others like me as a canary in the coal mine. Despite all the social and economic inequalities and failings foisted upon Blacks, we demonstrate the neurological equality that promises the inevitable demise of racist ranking should its social barriers be finally removed. Indeed, I show throughout America's time that Black equality, even excellence, is feared by White people more than the consequences of our debasement (so said Du Bois). Here, I demonstrate how, down on the ground of American scientific and social practice, little of the obvious equality of my unapologetic Blackness matters to them. It appears that most White people will recognize me instead by their racist stereotypes.

These, dialectically, insist upon "the other" that only people with White skins are real, complete, and worthy human beings.

Anthropology of Anthropology

The "reflections and reverberations," as David Hume once put things, between White people's deeply subjective social vantages and anthropologists' chosen constructions of a human world will be made obvious, below. The intrinsic subjectivity of science is never better anatomically defined and dissectible than is the racism embedded in White anthropologists' avowedly neutral constructions of the non-White world. This book is an ethnology and historical anthropology of White people manifest as anthropologists, relevant to understanding a broader White worldview. As biologists, social scientists, and humanists engaged in the business of constructing social identities and expectations, anthropology will also be useful in my effort to represent the methodologies and theories of many other scientific and historical fields. But anthropology makes explicit what White people (as anthropologists) think of other people. Thus, I make generalizable use of this example of the human practice of science to understand certain aspects of the "culture" of White Americans.

All sciences are implicated in epistemic limits (limits in ways of knowing) and cultural biases. Anthropologists readily expose White people's conceits because their descriptions delineating self and other are explicit, careful, and methodical. This exercise in the anthropology of anthropology (a term I have used since graduate school) is meant to help the study of mankind by making its biases and subjectivities more identifiable. The evidence of this book, however, does not lead to the possibility of a non-subjective brand of study capable of neutral truths. The question of controlling for these biases toward universal truths will remain hanging. Yet, I believe, we will find that one may come to better, more evidentially sound, and ethically useful, truths from time to time if one is aware of one's subjectivities than if one ignores them.

Ultimately, we will see that most of the people who have constructed themselves as "White" actually believe they are the only normal, fully human, objective, and universal people in our world, whether or not they admit to it. That attitude is racist. Nothing is uniquely normal about White people any

more than scientists can be neutral. They are a specific subjectivity made of their particular socially confined histories like everyone else. Yet, national institutions of education, science, and media are roundly enlisted to empower them with the authority of the cherished fantasy that they are not but one of many deeply subjective people.

Ideologies like this, implied White supremacy, work best when hidden in plain view. I estimate that roughly between 25% and 66% of White Americans *actively* participate in the effective maintenance of White supremacy (are destructively racist) to varied degrees through diverse attitudes and behaviors, explicitly or implicitly associated with it. I do not need the exact number. The fact that Black people must concern themselves with whether one-in-four or most White people mean them no good is a sufficiently damaging lifetime environment. People of color also internalize White supremacy to varied degrees, at their own expense. Racist behavior *itself* (rather than the brutalities of slavery and colonialism for which racist perspectives were first invented as moral cover) has become consensually immoral among most White people in recent decades. That is the corner a liberating world history has backed them into. If they chose to truly stop their racism, they would also have needed to end their privilege. They have not. As a result, current forms of racism are managed in order to disavow (even unto White people themselves) its, nonetheless, continued practice for the maintenance of White privilege. Thus, tropes like “racism without racists” (Bonilla-Silva 2010), to “White fragility” (DiAngelo 2018) and “diversity regimes” (Thomas 2018) now perform moral cover for racist practice from the ostensible high ground of anti-racism. Liberal, Boasian, anthropology has in part comprised such an evasive White worldview. I wish to explain what I have learned about the complexity of implied and structural racism. If you wish to gain from this book, try to belay your assumptions about your own participation in racism.

The hubris of which I speak is first evident in Western Christian exceptionalism. Its modern secular descendant (White supremacy) stirred first in the crucible of the Enlightenment under the condition of its convenience to European imperialism and North American slavery where White supremacy became a moral solution for the profitable dehumanization of the “other.” It will morph and morph again into its current tangled web of denials. This is that story.

On Epistemology

Ethnic Perspectives

What difference does the ethnicity of the scholar make? In *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), W.E.B. Du Bois opened a window onto differences in Blacks worldview by describing African American experience, cognition, and identity as “double consciousness.” African Americans easily and pervasively recognized that while in America, participant in its every moment, their emic

identities were separately “American” and “Negro.” They had choice in how to regard these identities, separately and together. Living in an emic world beyond “the veil” between Black and White societies (Blacks knew every aspect of White people’s domestic and public lives, doing the work). Black people also knew the views which Whites confidently held about them and about themselves. Of course, they, unlike White people, also knew their own society and views of the world.

Black people’s knowledge of their own history and culture was often very distinct from what White people had been willing to know. Blacks would, in their most subordinated contexts, privately and institutionally struggle to recognize themselves as they knew themselves to be. Not, for example, as the non-sapiens which even (perhaps, especially) the best-educated White person imagined them to be; or the “nonpersons” (Cobb 1981a) in the shadowy background of a historiographical world and nation built by White actual persons. At times, African Americans interacted in tactical multivalent communication when on the other side of the veil in recognition of dangerous hands over deaf ears.

Two worlds in one Black body, Du Bois tells us (1903). An appreciation of that subjectivity, I think, enhanced Black people’s ability to stand apart to evaluate a world “beyond” the blinding light of racism, a light shown on an intuitive, if false, world to which White people held more at stake and recognized fewer contradictions. It enabled Black people’s irrepressible defiance exemplified by slave revolts, the Civil Rights Movement, urban riots, Black Lives Matter and a host of literatures, arts, and other creative interventions. Actions, so motivated, would awaken White people’s empathy (or antipathy) buried beneath (or embedded in) the lies about Black’s full humanity which White people had hidden from themselves. As often, unfortunately, these acts of intellectual and moral confrontation became most effective by engendering a threat to White people’s lives and material gain, both domestically and as required for decolonization abroad.

This critical acuity allowed African Americans to struggle, requiring them to separate their identities and understandings of the world from those White people foisted upon them as the kind of mental slavery Frantz Fanon explained (1952, 1961). An enslaved worldview, accommodated and resisted, made an unachievable whiteness the goal and standard of one’s full humanity.

Mental slavery doomed one to follow White people’s lead in all things, like a loyal pet (in real time, a self-hating opportunist waiting for crumbs). Such an untenable relationship remains the expectation among too many White people today, who would have a Black person be (in Aristotle’s words) their “instrument.”

Religions, whether that of Jea, Martin King, or the Nation of Islam’s Malcolm X, Christianity, Islam, Santaria, Voodoo, or Rastafari were interpreted as liberation theologies by Black people. These ideologies provided common values, language, goals, and supernatural authority for organized opposition to a White status quo claiming many of the same humane ideals as

theirs. Religious activists could act against their oppression while acquiescing to the opioid condition of religious belief described by Marx, as the same balm John Jea described in slavery, to get through the brutal racist slings and arrows of the day. Other religious Blacks just applied the balm, keeping their heads down and cheeks turned until they could do so no more.

In science, social history, and humanism, Douglass, Firmin, Du Bois, Woodson, Leo Hansberry and Zora Neale Hurston, and later African and diasporic intellectuals (Diop, Fanon, Cesaire, Williams, Drake, Cobb, Jones, Cole, Bell, Marable, Mullings, Harrison, Beliso-de Jesus, Pierre, and I, as examples) constructed critical theories of racism, accumulation, and power (at times incorporating Marxist and womanist critiques) which challenge the truth value of hegemonic ideas about White scholar's "objectivity" (as neutrality) and White people's innocence. They recognized that these ideas of absolute or universal truth had been arrogated by and to a White world that Blacks knew only talked and listened to itself. These called Blacks "out of their name," misrepresenting them as evil, inferior, undeserving, intellectually shallow, and unauthoritative if by simply ignoring them.

Whether in identity, religion, or science, African Americans, among others in the diaspora, recognized human responsibility for ones' interpretations of and actions upon our world. They invented activist scholarship as they invented the nurture argument (Douglass 1854). Seeing much of White people's anthropology and historiography as defying the evidence (i.e., they were materially wrong), situated across the veil where Blacks worked but did not live, they recognized that such false knowledge could confidently exist. Historically, African American colleges and universities (even some rural one-room schools) have taught these and others of their own facts. All have essentially banned anthropology departments (if not the occasional, selective anthropologist) from over 100 HBCUs (historically Black colleges and universities) to this day.

White people, however, had little knowledge of their subjectivity (of the existence of other truths across veils) because they only read, talked to, and listened to themselves. The "other's" voice was silenced, like Frederick Douglass's description of the brutal snuffing out of the enslaved person's criticism of enslavers (by selling him South) in his first autobiography (1845, 2001). Or Black's voices are delegitimized as lacking the authority of the objective and universal truth which Whites exclusively arrogated to themselves against the inconvenient and uncomfortable vantages ("biased" voices and "special pleading") of others they oppressed.

Although he was in fact the leading abolitionist intellectual, it is not clear to me how effective even Frederick Douglass would have been had he not been made into evidence (a slave narrative "written by himself") for White Christian abolitionists and feminists who were finally convinced against slavery. With the important exception of John Brown, however, they still sought to avoid the war that Jefferson had long-ago predicted. They too harbored racist attitudes in objecting to Douglass's White second wife and to the idea

that Blacks would seek enfranchisement prior to its acquisition by White women (though Douglass had been a leading women's suffragist). He must have been a patronized but compelling orator in the ear of Abraham Lincoln (see Blight 2018).

Accommodating tokens would be brought to the fore by White people to give an acceptable Black view of racial segregation, prominently represented by Booker T. Washington.

Washington denigrated Africans and aggrandized whiteness, hailing White people's most successful members as the perpetual standard for Blacks under Jim Crow (Washington and Du Bois 1907). He, nonetheless, negotiated for the basic requirements of Black life. Du Bois, an activist scholar who insisted upon Black people's full equality, was an uncomfortable force for White people to reckon with. He belonged to Black people. Antenor Firmin was simply dismissed by Whites and canonized by Haitians. The singular Black physical anthropologist in the years surrounding World War II, W. Montague Cobb, with high honors and 1,100 publications in journals on both sides of "the veil," was rarely cited for his apolitical skeletal methodological work and never cited by White scholars for his core work on the demographic and health impacts of racial segregation. Blacks utilized all of their ideas. Polygenic and eugenic fantasies were embraced by White scholars and disseminated to their communities, and not by Blacks. Black scholars were very selective about what they could usefully take from Boasian liberal anthropology and left the rest. Meanwhile, they innovated their own anthropology, largely within Africana studies. Anthropology departments spread like wildfire at 20th-century White universities.

The Science this Recommends

I support a scientific intervention as well as a societal one with this book in three parts. I agree (with Emre Lakotos, apparently) that criticism which does not offer alternatives is irresponsible. These volumes are punctuated by three case studies of my *biocultural* research as an alternative to biological determinism, rooted in the ideas of African Diasporic intellectuals, synthesized with coherent Boasian ideas and Marxian political economy. These give primacy to the forces of social history that engage life "circumstances" or "environments" which influence biological "plasticity," variation, health, and harm. Together, these studies demonstrate the viability of theory which reverses the direction of the traditional biodeterministic causal arrow (pointing from nature to society) to the study of effects of society upon biology. These studies provide a more detailed view of the material harms of systems of White supremacy (slavery, segregation, and continuing discrimination) and class inequity. Biocultural research most clearly defines a pathway to the scientific turn required of an anti-racist research program, beyond the blinding light of race (see Goodman and Leatherman 1998; Zuckerman and Martin 2016; Blakey and Watkins 2021).

Regarding eugenical fantasies, much of our current framework for the study of evolution is contaminated by assumptions of White and elite supremacy which the eugenical imagination reflects. The ideas of interspecific or intraspecific ranking of organisms are simply unverified and are required in nature only as a figment of the Western imagination. From Aristotle's *Scala naturae*, to the Great Chain of Being, to Wilsonian sociobiology the notion of rank between or within highly successful cockroaches and humans is based upon equally false notions of drives for genetic competition and unilineal progress. These are powerful and intuitive ideas naturalizing Westerners' social universe. These represent the intrusion of racism, classism, and sexism upon the creative construction of a, thus anticipated, natural universe. A universe lacking in proof. Pushing these inefficacious ideas to the trash bin, we are left with the wonderful observation of continuously flowering diversity in our organic universe, without direction or ultimate limits. Yet, within this beautiful and frightening world, "man...makes his own history (Firmin 1885)."

Human social evolution (our particular accumulation of adaptive or survival possibilities) is not necessarily driven by competition for genetic wealth or aggressive struggles for elevated rank. While often aggressive, competitive, and greedy – human beings are also commonly the opposite of these things. We evolved as the food-sharing ape and our sociality is based upon social reciprocity. Justice.

But humans are also capable of the worst aggressions, increasingly realized to accommodate the inequities of agricultural societies in which reciprocity and justice have been increasingly contradicted by warring and oppressive elites. While aggression has always been a human contingency, war and structured inequality have no primordial evidence. These are instead evident only for the past 12,000 years of "civilized" life, long after our speciation had ended.

Though often swayed by the momentum of our histories, humans decide which form of civilization to uphold and it is at least important to know there is nothing more behaviorally urgent than sharing or less genetically compelling than aggressive intraspecific competition and inequity. This book helps remove the blinders of scientific racism, questioning that which has been made unquestionable by a dominant and dominating literature and propaganda, to imagine possibilities racism has veiled.

The Problem

The core problem to which these three volumes refer, whose developing parts pervade its narrative is, in a word, "whiteness." Whiteness is the un-self-critical and self-serving worldview in which a "white" person perceives him, her, or their self as the only real, complete human being with sacred and natural rights. "Whiteness" defines those who believe they have the right to take from "other" (incompletely human beings) without guilt

or shame. This uniquely “human” occupation of space by whiteness has always required rationale by which a reasonable person might justify such a bold-face lie as unquestionable truth. For this purpose, White people are surrounded by themselves, whether in the materiality of their exclusive places and status-specific spaces of domicile, work, and study; in the media and other stories they tell about their world; or represented in the ideational center of the human, religious, and natural contexts of life only they themselves are allowed to construct with authority. It is the occupier’s view, whether as a majority (United States and Israel) or minority (apartheid South Africa) of an imagined nation, guiltlessly possessed. The diverse larger world fades as a backdrop to White people’s exclusive human right of ownership and, therefore, passes into a marginal and unauthorial humanity. White supremacist science has been a principal rationale for the arrogation of full humanity to a single group of people. Its ideas wafted back and forth between Europe and its settler colonies, invigorating slavery, colonialism, nationalism, and fascism since the 18th century.

Over the course of the rise and persistence of racism, there have been two primary ways of knowing what it means to be truly human: belief and evidence. Judeo-Christian election and biological fact, each justified the worldview of whiteness that assigned human rights exclusively to pale people. At the beginning of European colonialism, religious justifications (biased explanations performing as universal and absolute truths) of European’s *moral* right to rule were carried like a banner into battle. By the end of the European Enlightenment in 19th-century North America, a new institution – the science of Man – would seek to resolve the contradictions of Christian dehumanization with the new secular power of measurement to discern real people from “the other.” *The study of humankind* – anthropology – was created to aid Christianity, if also to compete with it, in defining “what it means to be human.”²

Anthropology provided evidence to reinforce its theories imposed upon the observable universe, theories constructed by those who possessed the particular point of view of White people and yet thought of themselves as universal. Anthropological theories of both biology and culture will, in differing yet interwoven ways, lead to the same conclusions of White supremacy fostered by the common, conveniently racist assumptions of White people intent upon taking from others with impunity. During the nearly 400 years of the moral cloak of whiteness, ideological marginalization (the idea of race) and physical brutality (its consequent policing) will define and defend the limits of White privileges. Justifications of economic class, gendered, and other social inequalities will be also served by the biological deterministic imagination which racism elevated and the divisions it spurred.

White people’s privileges were repeatedly challenged by the simple fact of the full humanity of “others,” actively presented to expose their fraudulent basis. The religious and scientific basis of racial inequality remained questionable and therefore arguably at odds with the legitimating notions of an

equitable (“All men were created equal”) and meritorious state. Thus, White supremacy adapted an increasingly unremarkable presence (was hidden and denied just as it was practiced) over the course of Black and brown resistance to it. For example, races were “separate but equal” in the eugenical first half of the 20th century following the Civil War. Racial whiteness and its advantages were said not to exist (a mythical “level playing field”) during the obstructive backlash following the Civil Rights Movement. As such, the advocacy of White supremacy becomes barely noticeable, hidden in plain sight at least within a homogeneous white epistemic field. In *The Blinding Light of Race*, the history of anthropology will serve as a manageable framework within which to observe the subtler advocacy of whiteness rising from explicit White supremacy created in its laboratories and measurement factories. I will mark the continued “structural” presence of the privileges of whiteness despite the recent blurring of its boundaries in public discourse. With the additional commentary of Black observers, it becomes clear that whiteness is only well hidden from those who wish it to be so.

In their long-held narrative, “white people” are God’s gift to the world, the Adamic origin of civilization and everything worthy. They owed no debt to others. But Western Europeans were actually late to civilization and late to Christianity. They arose, however, at the helm of a great European Empire for the late, accelerated period of global social, cultural, and technological change. A 500-year period when draconian colonization and slavery produced extraordinary profit built upon land-holdings and coffers stolen by the last feudal lords, on which the first capitalist corporations thrived by unbounded greed and brutal competition. The fact is those whose lands were taken and those who were enslaved never needed Europeans for anything. Every continent was agricultural and civilized. It was far more the other way around that colonial Europeans needed the “other’s” lands and labor from which the modern industrial world was created largely under their, continuously contested, control. Yet, history in fact happened to them all together, is dialectical, and only happens as it happens.

The story I tell here is that human morality stems from a primordial expectation of reciprocity, which is just. It is the system upon which *sapiens* “the food-sharing ape” spent 95% of its existence as foraging bands. But, in the feudal inequalities of the late agricultural world, colonizing Europeans wanted all they could take and build from the lands and labors of others, which is unjust. They wished to defy their own “Golden Rule.” They nonetheless wanted, perhaps needed, to believe in their justice lest they be reduced to eating each other. So, they lied about it, even to themselves. A particular capacity of the symboling hominid. Rather than to extinguish the questionable right of might, Europeans represented themselves as the bearers and deliverers of Christian charity to those they brutalized for profit. And when that story ran out (fell on the sword of its own contradictions), they divined that “nature” would bless them with the gift of propriety in all matters concerning the “other,” however brutal, dehumanizing, and harsh.

That assumption, that White supremacy is “natural” (and therefore guiltless), was repeated in so many ways as to touch every way of knowing, especially the new “Natural philosophy, science...” Their sense of unique “election,” entitlement, and worthiness in all things was worn as moral armor as they murdered, stole, raped, plundered, and held much of the world’s people in captivity under foot. The name of this new biological system of morally numbing thought is “racism.”

Details of the Problem

The science most attuned to this need for moral cover, meant to explain (and thereby rationalize) the inequitable relation of Whites to others as reasonable (natural), is called “anthropology” (the study of humankind). As with any study, however, involving observation and interpretation, much good might come of it. The harms of anthropology’s biased lens that assumes the normalcy of White people’s privilege and the relative subordination (though not deliberate subjugation) of others are apparent, however. Ideas born in European experience (of war and looting) and their brands of Christian philosophy (like the superior spiritual worth of white skin) were brought together as an intuitive system in which they could nearly do nothing wrong to the “other.” Their ubiquitous description of the sainted self and evil “other” made of them the deserving donor of all things; the other was the undeserving debtor who should be grateful for subordination to whiteness. But “the other” always knew, could see with eyes un-clouded by White people’s need to be redeemed for their greedy immorality, that this Eurocentric gloss was untrue. It was untrue not only of the present injustices which marked their relationships with the enslavers and thieves of the moment; it was materially untrue of the history of the world. Anthropology was born as the history and science of human differences and relationships. Its laboratory was “the other.” In the last two centuries of “modernity,” anthropology’s innovators reached back to compete with a dated religious understanding of the world and replaced it with the new justifications of “Natural philosophy, science...”

In the West and especially in the North American exemplar of the conditions I have emphasized, both anthropology and racism begin together. The intuitive logics of the 19th-century anthropological lens are rooted in 18th-century racist assumptions of the naturalness (the virtue) of White people’s right to take everything from others. So, it begins as measurements of head volume among the divisions of humanity classified by Linnaeus as stereotypes of “races” worthy of their current colonized and enslaved relationships to colonizers and enslavers. This “biological determinism” will develop even into the 21st century. Debated and put down by brutal 19th- and 20th-century wars demanded by the human need of justice, scientific racism would only be nominally rejected (use of the word “race” is rejected after World War II but its greatest poison of biodeterminism persisted). The adamancy of White people’s insistence upon their natural election

is most evident once one recognizes that little else of practical value is derived from biological determinism.

The seeds of empirical truth in Darwin's mathematics of the flowering variation of life quickly wafted to social Darwinist metaphors of naturally ranked capitalist society at the turn of the 20th century, a turn of thought initiated by Darwin himself in the last pages of *The Origin of Species* (1859). He hands future chapters devoted to human evolution over to Herbert Spencer after having set the premise, prone to inequality, that life seeks "perfection." Factually, it does not. Nonetheless, Eurocentric progress and class and racial ranking, now set in motion, became inevitable components of the new evolutionism. The White elite were seen as the best and latest realization of humanity. All of human biology, especially human genetics, will bark up that wrong tree for more than a century as the interpretive scope of science limits itself to the imaginations of White and elite believers that the causes of social inequality must be found in "nature," rather than in elite's extraction of surplus value, said Marx. Natural science would become the authoritative sibling of Christian externalization of cause, circumventing recognition of Antenor Firmin's contemporary observation that "...man makes his own history."

The emergence of an anti-biodeterminism and ostensible anti-racist anthropology would, however, emerge in competition with the wholly apologetic view of biological anthropology and anatomy. At the turn of the 20th century, the status of non-northern European immigrants to the United States was being racialized for subjugation and theft of the "surplus value" of their labor along with that of Black and brown people (Asians were being barred citizenship or entry). Douglass and Firmin had set the "nurture" side of the nature-nurture debate in the mid-late 19th century, but their words and writings would only be appreciated by the African diaspora. European immigrants would introduce their vantage on the so-called Nordic supremacy, while the new science of anthropology might still include their European voices. Their anti-racist anthropology, however, would only go so far as they could while retaining White people's privileges (their common privileges) as justified. Representative of the Jewish "other," anthropologist Franz Boas, could peer past the arrogance of placing Anglo-Saxon Protestants atop the Western science pyramid of ranked and evolving human history and society. Jews knew better. But where the darker people were concerned, these now quite European Jewry could barely see themselves any more critically than had other White people. An equivocal "cultural" anthropology developed to understand colonized and racialized others as potentially, but not quite, equal, leaving White people, if newly framed, still the original bearers of civilization. The Judeo-Christian Adam. Yet, all cultures had developed *logically*, we were generously told, from the perspective of cultural relativism.

White people remained worthy as *the standard* of "Man" just as Blumenbach had argued at the end of the European Enlightenment. This did not, however, constitute equality with the dark, subjective other. Both the

framework of history and its White framers were made exceptional, objective, neutral, and universal, with all the epistemic authority appertaining thereto. These White anthropologists, like other White people, knew what others “thought” – but they “knew.” A pantheon of European and White American scholars of “human kind” (although there is but one) wrote to explain all they knew others thought in anthropology textbooks. These, they believed, would teach all of humanity (White people) about why, how, and what all of the rest of humankind was in relation to White people. They still wrote of savage and barbarous peoples, if newly named and progressing, while all White people were the civilized model for what all human beings might hope to become. Indeed, anthropologists need not study them at all (the unmarked standard human being to which all the humanities were devoted). Their reference was usually implied, or as “us” or “we” in their stories of the other.

Now as “culture,” these relationships were learned and, in the post-eugenical terror of World War II, this liberal narrative finally gained prominence. It was not noted, however, that the colonial and discriminatory oppression of the “other” had reduced them to poverty and political alienation, even in their own countries. People of color remained seen as culturally backward or as having created their own “culture of poverty” (said the Boasian, Oscar Lewis) needing to emulate White people if they were ever to rise to look a White man in the eye. The post-War independence struggles and the Civil Rights Movement were in irrepressible motion by this time and anthropology would nearly be trampled by them. Anthropologists began to be forced out of the Third World (going “part way home,” said John Cole). Knocking at the gate, now loudly, were the colonized and formerly enslaved with a contesting scholarly discourse to that of the gated White intellectual community. They had watched this man talk to himself and pat himself on the back for how critically acute his thinking had been for far too long. As the field of anthropology responded with change at the end of the 20th century with post-this and post-that theory, it would remain uncritical of its whiteness, even when it breached its silence on the inequities of capitalism and colonialism.

A pantheon of White scholars, anthropologists and others, are paraded in textbooks as the founding authorial voice that defined what it means to be human. Students are taught that Bronislaw Malinowski (culture, society, and the individual), A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (the cultural value of women in the Trobriand Islands), Edward Tyler (imprinting society on religions), Lewis Henry Morgan (classifications of kinship), Franz Boas and his students like Margaret Mead (the dominance of culture in human affairs), and Lesley White (technology and cultural evolution) created the study of humankind along with other founding fathers and mothers of the field (sampling the textbook, *Cultural Anthropology: the human challenge* by Haviland, Prins, Walrath and McBride 2005). These may serve as a likely sampling of founders in any introductory text. They will use the non-White colonized world as a laboratory, producing reductionist knowledge, while simultaneously primitivizing

the non-Western peoples of color these most marginalized among them will come to represent in the public mind.

Other texts like Conrad Kottak's somewhat broader *Cultural Anthropology* (2002) cover a similar range of topics in describing this global, comparative, holistic (interdisciplinary) discipline's approaches to the basic aspects of human society: economy, religion, marriage, political systems, language, and arts. Kottak's textbook brings in a section on Human Diversity and [culturally constructed] "Race" in different parts of the world with a focus on its fluidity from his work in Brazil. There is a discussion of colonialism and world systems theory. Tellingly, there is an approximately ½ page section entitled "The Third World Talks Back" (401) mainly detailing a Mexican anthropologist's (Guillermo Battalla) 1966 criticisms of the biases of anthropological theory and other's substantial accusations of anthropologists as spies. He says the latter problem was resolved by the late 1990s Principles of Professional Responsibilities (1997). This brief comment essentially constitutes a dismissal of the actual mass of criticisms, especially of theory, mounted by people of color by 2002 (start with Willis 1972; Jones 1970; Cole 1977; Hsu 1983). Applied anthropology may represent the most useful (as the name suggests) of the recent mainstream of the field. An introductory reader on *Applying Cultural Anthropology* (Podolefski and Brown 1999) often contains the exoticism of "the other" projected on the West (like Horace Minor's "Body Ritual Among the Nacerima" or American spelled backward). It is full of old foci on rules of language and behavior shared and not shared among world societies – useful if anthropologically stereotypical. There are examples of biological explanations of health differences wrapped in the language of nature-culture interaction (Eaton and Konner 1985; Brown 1991). Work by Phillippe Bourgois (1989) on the horrors of a crack-infested community in New York City represents an important turn of the decolonizing anthropologists of his time. The truly eye-opening review of "White Privilege: unpacking the invisible knapsack" (Peggy McIntosh 1989) is what I am saying we need much, much more of.

There are two Black anthropologists of the 46 authors (James Gibb's classic 1963 work on the Kpelle moot court in Liberia and John Rickford's 1997 linguistic work on an historical basis for Ebonics) working in a customary anthropological mode of showing how culturally different ways of being (administering justice or speaking) actually work rationally. Perhaps this is where a White people's (Eurocentric) question meets dialectically with the 'vindicationist' (see Drake 1980) efforts of Black scholars, rather than being a question for diverse cultural practitioners who might assume that they are rational beings. The many critiques of White racism and representations of Black communities by Black scholars, however, are missing even here. Black anthropologist William Willis argued that scholars from these communities were more interested in the problems of racism and colonialism than with whether or not their own societies were reasonable (1972).

These and the vast majority of late 20th-early 21st-century anthropologists descending from them adhere to the study of *everything other than* the human toll of White supremacy on domestic and international (colonial) human biology and cultural life. They collectively construct a world in which a discriminatory system of *White supremacy does not exist*. A world of inequalities which, unaffected by racist and classist exploitation, are left unexplained and subject to the explanatory black box of biologists as “natural.” Or those differences may rest as strictly “cultural” phenomena, things of interest to researchers who ignore the influences of political economy for structures like kinship or sexual liberalism which they believe to be most fundamentally “cultural.” These they imagine lay beyond or beneath the presumed ephemeral influences of global power, economic exploitation, and White people’s selfish behavior in the world they largely controlled. Anthropology omitted Black and brown people in the industrial world in search of culturally reductionist “experiments” in the most extreme margins of human existence, natural and cultural. Other fields of history and society could be relied upon to describe White people (interchangeably “western,” “modern,” “industrial,” “civilized”).

And, in the self-deception characteristic of whiteness, the field of anthropology gives moral cover to itself. The original racist craniologists in anthropology’s own pedigree were removed (“whitewashed”) to achieve its convenient liberal gloss as founded by Franz Boas rather than by admitted racists like Samuel Morton or Aleš Hrdlička. Boas’ anti-racism was also exaggerated as though it equally included Black and brown people, which I will argue it did not. In these ways, anthropologists (and White people) construct a false image of themselves and the “other.” As I argue throughout, it is not usually what anthropologists say that is inaccurate and racist. It is the world left naked by what they do not study or say, which facilitates White supremacy both by ignorance of its influences and by the falsely limited representations of “the other” left in its light.

The Black, Asian, Native, and Latino scholars’ critical work was also ignored (with rare, tokenized exceptions to prove the rule) throughout the history of anthropology. These might have filled gaps in the relevance of anthropology to the problem of whiteness in their world. Instead of these non- and pre-anthropologists like the authors of 18th- and 19th-century “slave narratives” (a.k.a. what might today be called abolitionist autoethnographies), we are given non- and pre-anthropologist founding fathers of the field (Durkheim, for example) who are White. To have included the voices of people of color would show the racism of the field and society they addressed. These represent the choices of White people as anthropologists rather than resulting from a neutral historical process of the intellectual development of the field. What, for example, might be the difference had Olaudah Equiano’s first accurate abolitionist description of West Africa and the slave trade (1789) been the beginning of the “study of human kind”?

I show, with science and the rest of Western society’s behavior, how long the incisive voice of the other was ignored in order to protect the pretense

of White supremacy; a pretense meant to convince anyone listening that White people had never done anything wrong while they stole most of what they had accomplished from “others.” Frederick Douglass shows that the immediate response of White people to an enslaved man’s truth about his White abuser was to sell the enslaved man south, into hell (1845). This marks my understanding of the intention behind the deliberate omissions of Black anthropologists from syllabi recently established by Beliso-de Jesus and Pierre (2019). As free people in the 21st century, Black people are denied entry into the room, but when they manage to have their day in court, they register the same, redundant complaints, to be dismissed as “special pleading” without authoritative testimony, says legal scholar Derrick Bell (1992). “White Fragility,” says Robin DiAngelo, is to register shock and insult when racist unfairness is mentioned in a White person’s presence, shutting down the conversation (2018). The Florida “Stop WOKE Act” (2022) of its Republican majority make teaching Black history from the perspective of Black scholars illegal because it makes “*people*” uncomfortable. Each rare president of color of the 20th–21st-century American Anthropological Association (Hsu, Moses, Mullings, Gupta, and Battle-Baptiste) eloquently and substantively complained about the racist blinders of anthropology, its White practitioners and society. These were effectively ignored by a White mainstream that instead insisted White people were uniquely neutral or progressive based on assertions of anti-racialism (not anti-racism, but the denial of race itself) and other forms of denial (Blakey 1994a, 2023). Now, “diversity regimes,” says ethnographer James Thomas (2018), allow college students to stand against racism only so long as White supremacy is not mentioned and pointed out as its primary cause in the United States. “All lives matter” is true, but evades recognition of the particular power, privilege, and debt of White supremacy. The idea that racism results from everyone’s tendency to be biased (residing somewhere in the amigdala) is an evasive scientific lie this book refutes.

This scientific system of dishonesty and denial gives authority to the popular duplicity of White people. This use of “nature” to cast both racism and societal inequality as unrelated to a convenient and historically concocted system of White supremacy serves to deny the existence of White supremacist institutions and their benefactors. It casts a blind eye to the problem it thus encourages to continue. The denial of racism has become the New Racism.

The election of whiteness (White privilege) without justified guilt pervades the assumptions of the common White man’s and woman’s worldview. It is “baked in,” as they say, by its repetition in their own, and therefore trusted, images and narratives. Only their needs are primary and the other’s critical voice is illegitimate. How else might a slight (but sufficient) majority of White women and the vast majority of White men have found it preferable in 2024 to vote for a White male, capitalist, dictatorial, sexist, near-rapist, liar, and convicted felon with admittedly poor judgment to be their leader – for the second time. Against, mind you, a more competent and politically experienced Black woman. They placed their perceived economic benefits from his leadership above all else as though the interests of White workers and owners were to

be satisfied by a “straight talking” (if vulgar) White male member of the latter class. Working White people disappointed in their place in the American economy were quickly led to scapegoat brown and Black immigrants rather than point to the 1% like Trump himself who had actually taken worker’s fair share of the economy. The capitalist ownership class holds the majority of the planet’s wealth; wealth they certainly did not create all by themselves.

These Trump supporters, as clearly evident in a final rally in New York City, also wanted to enjoy the freedom to flagrantly disregard any social obligation to guard the feelings and dignity of “shit-hole” and trashcan island others. This is White supremacy. Many White Americans have resisted so-called “political correctness” since the Reagan era’s backlash at the end of the Civil Rights Movement. They never agreed to the self-criticism required to recognize and discipline themselves against the common use of racist and sexist language; a discipline required to achieve mutual respect. It appears they would rather silence the other, as in Frederick Douglass’ antebellum example. Nor were most White people ready for an ancillary sharing of the material wealth of the nation through affirmative action or reparations owed to “the other.” Now, in 2024, these fears and demands would have full expression.

Blacks (both men and women) voted decisively against Trump. Latinos, some courting the tender margins of whiteness, also voted against, but not decisively. The election of Republicans to rule was all about White people (as “Americans”) reasserting their unabashed privilege as they are pressed to the edge of a foreseeable end of their once comfortable tyrannical majority. Approaching the wall, they would make America great again.

How many White people are racist? The surreal reality of people of color is that it could be anyone.

So, the Ku Klux Klan and the Proud Boys are only the dirty workers of that majority of racist “normal” White voters. These volumes are about the latter. The United States has long been torn, now nearly in half, between White supremacy and its opposition. That half of the American electorate wanting and working toward a just society of inter-ethnic appreciation (not tolerance) and a fairer distribution of wealth, a society that must pay its debts and hold its childish tongue to be free of shame, is repeatedly stalled. Held down by the momentum of a history where White racism lives and anti-racism struggles, human society moves two steps forward, then one step back repeatedly, forward ever nonetheless. Can we do better? One must peer beyond the blinding light of race to see.

Note

- 1 I later studied at the University of London and at Oxford as a visiting student while conducting field research on racism and stress in London. I felt honored to have been supported in my desire to study at Oxford University by Ojikutu’s teacher, the geneticist, G. Ainsworth Harrison. He would overturn the obstructive dismissal of Vernon Reynolds who I had originally written for admission. Individual choices do make a difference.